

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2013/72)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, and I request the Chief of Protocol to escort him to his seat at the Council table.

Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I also welcome the presence in the Chamber of His Excellency Mr. Ivan Mrkić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Hashim Thaçi to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2013/72, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zarif.

Mr. Zarif: The report before the Council (S/2013/72) details the key events and the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) that occurred between 16 October 2012 and 15 January 2013.

Since I last addressed the Council, on 27 November (S/PV.6872), we have seen some important positive

developments, thanks to the direct Belgrade-Pristina engagement in the high-level political dialogue facilitated by the European Union (EU). Since October, Prime Ministers Ivica Dačić and Hashim Thaçi, who are present in the Chamber today, have met for a total of seven rounds of dialogue in Brussels. In addition, Presidents Tomislav Nikolić and Atifete Jahjaga met for the first time on 6 February as part of that same process, signaling the full political engagement of both sides. Together, these meetings have marked an essential — indeed, historic — new chapter in the collective effort to overcome the legacy of the past conflict. The leaders involved have demonstrated political courage as well as foresight by their participation, and they deserve strong recognition for having embarked on such a difficult yet indispensable process.

Progress has emerged from these meetings, in particular the most recent, the last of which took place only two days ago. Accordingly, I am very pleased that today the Council has the opportunity to take stock of the achievements made so far. Detailed discussions on the further implementation of the agreement on the integrated management of crossing points have addressed more complex questions, such as the management of fees and duties at those points. The parties' liaison officers are expected to begin work soon within the European Commission offices in Belgrade and Pristina.

More recently, discussions have shifted to addressing the matter of Serbian institutions operating within Kosovo, as well as a range of difficult issues specific to the situation of northern Kosovo. It is my hope that the parties will remain steadfast in their determination to reach acceptable compromises on such highly sensitive issues, and find viable solutions that can better serve the interests and aspirations of all communities living in Kosovo.

During this period of encouraging political progress, there have also been significant challenges to face on the ground, including adverse security incidents and frequent instances of inflammatory rhetoric and posturing from various quarters. The latter have not only put unhelpful strains on the atmosphere around the political process, but in some cases have also threatened efforts to ensure that agreements are translated into practice. In the face of such developments, we have joined others in continuing to urge both sides not simply to remain committed to the dialogue, but also to exert

more active leadership in order to temper the emotions and reactions of their constituencies.

In that light, I wish to stress today that if this vital political engagement is to fulfil its maximum potential, it needs to be accompanied by strenuous, constant and coherent work on the ground on the part of both the mandated international presences and local leaders. For its part, UNMIK continues to implement a broad-based strategic review of all its activities and to enhance functional coordination with its international partners. Our goal is to help ensure that the political process is reflected in the realities we face daily in Kosovo as much as it is reflective of them.

I wish now to briefly highlight some key ongoing issues, where continued attention and action must accompany and complement the steps being taken by those directly engaged in the political dialogue.

There have been episodes of increased tension in northern Kosovo both during the reporting period and in the two months since. Some of these have been motivated, at least in part, by local confusion and misunderstanding about the substance of the political talks in Brussels. Unfortunately, that uncertainty was aggravated at times by very ill-considered statements from some local leaders. We and our partners continue to urge Belgrade and Pristina to significantly enhance their communication with the population living in the north. At the same time, we are urging local political leaders to act more responsibly, in a manner that will help to protect the long-term interests of their constituencies. With all interlocutors, we have stressed how important it is that they base their public assessments strictly on reliable information and renounce the chronic practices of inflammatory rhetoric and short-term point-scoring.

In northern Mitrovica, there has been a very troubling and extended series of incidents involving the use of explosive devices, most of them apparently targeting properties. Sadly, however, on 4 February one such incident, in Mitrovica's mixed Three Towers neighbourhood, resulted in light shrapnel injuries to two children at play in their home. Their family has since moved away from the city permanently.

An ongoing lack of consensus about municipal authority in northern Mitrovica has also continued to cause volatility in the mixed areas. Competing assertions of authority by the administrative office in northern Mitrovica and the parallel Kosovska Mitrovica municipality continue to produce persistent tension

and occasional confrontation on the ground. I am concerned that a stand-off over housing construction and reconstruction works, spearheaded by the southern Mitrovica municipality in the Kroi i Vitakut/Brđani neighbourhood of Zvečan/Zveçan municipality, may continue during the coming spring.

As I have detailed in previous briefings, ending budget allocations to the UNMIK administrative office in Mitrovica has undermined the most functional channel available to address such problems through consensus. Despite that development, my international staff continue to carry out the important non-executive functions of the United Nations administration in the areas of local facilitation, conflict prevention and mediation. Coordinated preparations are under way — involving the EU Special Representative, the Organization for Security and Cooperation, the International Security Force in Kosovo (KFOR), ourselves and other mandated actors — to respond appropriately and collectively so as to prevent any adverse developments in that area. It is very unfortunate and unacceptable that the personnel of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) continue to be constrained in their access to all areas necessary to fully discharge their mandate, particularly given that EULEX is now intensifying its focus on improved investigative practices.

We were deeply distressed by the wave of vandalism and destruction that took place across Kosovo between 13 and 22 January, during which around 200 gravestones in several Serbian Orthodox cemeteries were damaged or destroyed, in some cases by use of explosives or firearms. During this same period, a monument dedicated to Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians killed during the Second World War was destroyed by earthmover in broad daylight before an applauding crowd. These reprehensible actions were unbecoming Kosovo, as were some imprudent efforts to justify them in the press by making reference to actions undertaken elsewhere.

In this respect, however, I was gratified by an unambiguous and timely statement issued by the Kosovo police. Representatives of the international community unanimously condemned such wanton acts and, together with UNMIK staff, were instrumental in encouraging more proactive public responses from local and central political authorities. Further appropriate and welcome actions have been taken by the Kosovo authorities,

including the allocation of public funds for the repair and reconstruction of the graves and monuments.

Understandably, the Serb community and the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo remain deeply concerned by the expressions of hatred and intolerance that accompanied these and other acts targeting Orthodox sites and symbols. Regrettably, the level of attendance at Orthodox Christmas services in some parts of Kosovo fell significantly following public threats and a few protests organized by some radical groups in Kosovo.

The international community is particularly concerned over the continuing rejection by the municipal leadership in Dečani of a decision taken by the Special Chamber of the Supreme Court of Kosovo on 27 December. The decision rejected the claims over a parcel of land by two socially owned enterprises against Serbia and the Visoki Dečani Monastery. After summarily suspending relations with the monastic community, municipal leaders not only did far too little to restrain aggressive reactions against the court's decision, but also effectively condoned them. Such reactions included an attempt by a handful of demonstrators to enter the grounds of Visoki Dečani on 8 February, as well as several attempts to place offensive placards on its walls. Supported by KFOR, the Kosovo police have so far been able to prevent harm coming to the monastery; however, much stronger leadership from politicians and public officials is needed to demonstrate that universal values and respect for the rule of law will be defended in practice.

Too many serious crimes in northern Kosovo, as well as those affecting communities in the rest of Kosovo, continue to go unsolved and remain a matter of very sober concern. Judicial performance in Kosovo continues to be another significant stumbling block, aside from the political disputes. These issues were amply highlighted in the most recent report of the European Commission to the European Parliament and Council on progress in fulfilling requirements for a visa liberalization road map. Unsolved cases inevitably become subject to political manipulation and lead to the build-up of public frustration.

The political dialogue is now at a critical stage, and the parties are poised to make fundamental progress. Alongside this, stability on the ground remains fragile and is likely to remain so while these talks delve into topics that are both the most sensitive and the most

essential. I trust that the progress being achieved will be welcomed by the membership of the Council, and that they will moreover offer unequivocal support to the parties to remain steadfast, regardless of the inevitable challenges and setbacks along the way. Likewise, the international community should be well prepared to place its collective weight and support behind all agreements reached mutually by the parties, and to fully support their implementation.

As I have outlined today, and as also detailed in the report, incidents and tensions continue to arise on the ground, underscoring the need for energy and effort to be rededicated by all international presences, alongside the negotiations. Simply put, it is imperative that the inevitable problems and setbacks on the ground, however difficult they may be for those affected, not be permitted to undermine the atmosphere and the potential for progress in the vital political talks.

I ask that the Council pursue opportunities to make use of its authority and influence with political leaders on all sides in order to send clear and unified signals regarding its high expectations and of its readiness to support and reward constructive actions. Far too much is at stake to permit short-term political challenges, anxieties and setbacks to put at risk the fundamental and historic opportunity that now stands before the parties. Effective, efficient and coherent work by all international presences is needed to promote and sustain the conditions in which political talks may achieve their true potential.

I wish to conclude my remarks today by thanking you, Sir, and all members of the Security Council for your close attention and support for the work of UNMIK, including for our efforts to correctly tailor our contributions to the evolving circumstances on the ground.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Zarif for his briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia.

Mr. Dačić (*Serbia*) (*spoke in Serbian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999).

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United

Nations Interim Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his work to date.

The Republic of Serbia considers UNMIK as the key factor in establishing peace and stability in Kosovo and Metohija. We strongly support its activities aimed at ensuring living conditions for all population groups there.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia very much appreciates the efforts of the international community to establish a constructive atmosphere in the talks between Belgrade and Pristina under the auspices of the European Union.

I have studied carefully the report of the Secretary-General on the work of UNMIK from 16 October 2012 to 15 January 2013 (S/2013/72). It is with regret that I note that the information set out in the report continues to reflect the very precarious and sensitive position of the Serbian community in Kosovo and Metohija, as well as the existence of considerable security concerns.

The Republic of Serbia is firmly committed to building peace, security and stability in the region, in its quest to establish a foundation for a common European future. On a number of occasions during the period under consideration, the Government of the Republic of Serbia confirmed its readiness to make a substantial and constructive contribution to overcoming outstanding issues and to offer solutions that meet the needs of all population groups.

My country's concerted policy is based on seeking compromise while actively defending our national interests, with equal respect for the legitimate rights of both Serbs and Albanians living in Kosovo and Metohija. Accordingly, we continue to oppose unilateral steps from all quarters — for example, the decision of the Assembly of Kosovo to ask for an international country code for Kosovo through the Republic of Albania, even though negotiations regarding telecommunications are pending.

We shall continue to promote and carry out our policy based on the search for peaceful solutions through a constructive dialogue with Pristina, which has already yielded significant results. For the Government of the Republic of Serbia, dialogue is the only way to find sustainable solutions for the problems that the people of Kosovo and Metohija face on a daily basis. We are resolved to fully implement the agreements reached thus far, and we are open to talks on all issues.

The Republic of Serbia has embarked upon dialogue out of a desire to achieve concrete progress in the talks between Belgrade and Pristina. A number of very important issues were discussed at the recent meetings held in Brussels, including the functioning of the agreement on the integrated management of crossing points as well as the exchange and the status of liaison officers.

The meeting in Brussels between Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić and Ms. Atifete Jahjaga once again clearly confirmed our political positions spelled out in the resolution of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. In line with that resolution, the specificities of the territory of Kosovo and Metohija are recognized in accordance with Council resolution 1244 (1999). However, it also notes the existence of the Serbian and other communities that should have certain autonomous status.

The Republic of Serbia believes that the United Nations should continue to perform its key role of coordinating all international actors engaged in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija under its aegis. We believe that the role of UNMIK in stabilizing the situation in the region is irreplaceable. Its current mandate must therefore remain unchanged and, if possible, strengthened, irrespective of projected budgetary restrictions. We support an increase in UNMIK's activities, as well as a heightened presence for the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and more efficient cooperation between two missions. It is of the utmost importance that the UNMIK Administration in northern Mitrovica continue to fulfil its mandate and find a status-neutral way for the missions in Kosovo and Metohija to function, as provided for in resolution 1244 (1999).

For the Republic of Serbia, the continued financing of the UNMIK Administration in Mitrovica is of particular importance. We deem unacceptable any further limitations on the activities of the Administration for reasons of financial constraints due to the cessation of financing by the provisional institutions of self-government in Pristina. After all, UNMIK is the only legitimate international presence that the people in the north of Kosovo and Metohija continue to trust.

The Republic of Serbia has great interest in strengthening the political composition of UNMIK, in particular with respect to questions of special importance for the Serbian community. In that regard,

special mention should be made of the protection of cultural and religious heritage, in particular of the Serbian Orthodox Church, improving the level of legal and security protection and realizing the right to free return and reconciliation. In fact, those questions form the fundamental basis for the establishment of conditions necessary for normal coexistence among all communities in Kosovo and Metohija.

A few days ago, we commemorated the ninth anniversary of the March pogrom during which 19 persons were killed, 4,000 Serbs were expelled and 6 towns and 10 villages were ethnically cleansed, while over 150 religious sites of the Serbian Orthodox Church, of which 34 date back to the Middle Ages, were damaged or destroyed. Some of them are of particular cultural significance and under the protection of UNESCO. According to United Nations estimates, 51,000 individuals took part in the pogrom, and none of them were held accountable. For that reason, we call for the resumption of the investigation, which would lead to the identification of perpetrators, as well as the instigators of the March pogrom, so that the crime does not remain yet another crime without punishment.

In the period under consideration, the Republic of Serbia once again demonstrated its willingness and readiness to participate actively in, and to make a contribution to, overcoming the existing problems. The main goal of that constructive approach is to find a solution that will improve life for all communities in Kosovo and Metohija while also preserving the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia.

I regret to note that, in spite of the long-standing international presence, the situation on the ground has not improved substantially. The main problems we continue to face include limits to, and the prevention of, the freedom of movement, a lack of security, the impossibility of using the Serbian language, difficult access to institutions, a lack of the necessary conditions for the sustainable return of refugees, constant threats to Serbian cultural and religious heritage, and the illegal seizure of property owned by the Republic of Serbia.

Those problems are surely the most important factors negatively affecting the quality of life itself. According to the available data, 93 ethnically motivated attacks were recorded between 1 October 2012 and 31 January 2013, in which one person was killed and 20 persons were injured. Within just a few days in

January of this year, 102 tombstones were damaged or destroyed in Orthodox graveyards. As a rule, no one was held accountable or punished for those incidents. Of particular importance is the increase in the number of registered ethnically motivated low-intensity crimes, such as threats, intimidation and theft. Such "low-intensity" crimes contribute to further limiting the freedom of movement.

In the period under review, the continued increase in the number of detentions and arrests of members of the Serbian community — without any explanation of the legal basis on which such warrants were issued — has been the cause of additional concern and anxiety. The unlawful detention and beating of 11 Serbian youths in Gracanica on Christmas Eve further heightened concern and fear among the Serbian population in Kosovo and Metohija. Those incidents create additional pressure on, and distrust within, the Serbian community, while at the same time being gross violations of the basic human rights guaranteed to each and every individual by the Charter of the United Nations. They are equally unacceptable from the perspective of the values upon which the European Union is based.

Although they honour all previously agreed procedures, officials and eminent public persons of the Republic of Serbia are not allowed to enter and stay in Kosovo and Metohija, in contravention of the basic human right to freedom of movement. I would in particular point out that, last January, even the President of Republic of Serbia was banned from visiting Kosovo and Metohija and attending the Christmas liturgy.

It is with regret that I must note that the process of the return of internally persons from Kosovo and Metohija is very slow. According to the most recent data, for 2012, only 302 persons of Serbian nationality returned to Kosovo and Metohija, while there were 464 such returns in 2011. That data provides telling evidence of a continued reduction in the number of returnees. Paradoxically, the international community shows less and less interest in the problem. In particular, I would like to point to the October 2012 report of the Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which states that the frequent plundering of uninhabited houses, the intimidation of returnees and the desecration of places of religious and cultural importance have very negatively affected potential returnees' perception of security.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia continues to be concerned about the manner in which privatization is implemented in Kosovo and Metohija by the so-called Kosovo Privatization Agency. Of particular concern is the privatization of public and social enterprises in Serbian communities. The privatization of the large Trepcja mining complex, currently postponed, is illegal and contrary to resolution 1244 (1999). The Republic of Serbia holds majority ownership of the complex, as well as of other Serbian enterprises. In addition, as guarantor, the Republic of Serbia continues to make payments to the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Paris and London Clubs for loans to enterprises in Kosovo and Metohija.

I take this opportunity to draw the Council's attention to the disturbing facts presented in paragraph 31 of the report on the work of UNMIK, which indicates that there is an increase in the number of complaints against police and prosecution officials for inefficiency in investigating crimes affecting minority communities. Likewise, the reform of the judiciary and justice systems in Kosovo and Metohija — embarked upon recently, as indicated in paragraph 28 of the report — has already been criticized by the international community.

The inadequate level of development in the area of the rule of law is referred to in the annex to the Secretary-General's report — on the work of EULEX — which draws attention to the "Compact". Once again, the question arises as to the status-neutrality of that EULEX act, especially at this very sensitive moment when each and every inconsiderate and biased move can cause unforeseeable consequences. I should therefore like to recall that, under the Secretary-General's six-point plan, UNMIK is obliged to oversee the process of the transfer of powers to EULEX. However, it is also obliged to see to it that the principle of the status-neutrality of EULEX is maintained.

We have recently witnessed even more instances of desecrations of Serbian tombstones and cultural monuments in Kosovo and Metohija. Such incidents are telling evidence of the need for the continued presence of the Kosovo Force in Kosovo and Metohija.

I should again like to point to the importance of carrying out a full and efficient investigation of the allegations of trafficking in human organs set out in the report by Mr. Dick Marty. To that end, Serbia is ready to continue to cooperate with the EULEX investigation team. The truth must be established in the utmost

professional and impartial way, while bearing in mind in particular the information collected by UNMIK with regard to the destruction of evidence. We continue to call for more significant role for the United Nations in the investigation.

We consider it necessary that UNMIK continue to be present in Kosovo and Metohija at an appropriate strength so that, among other things, the Security Council can continue to be effectively informed, considering that the United Nations plays an irreplaceable role in providing legitimacy during the process of seeking a comprehensive solution.

Without respect for the basic human and other rights of the non-Albanian population in Kosovo and Metohija, without protection for their interests and cultural and religious heritage, and without a full implementation of European standards in those areas, the desired goal of creating a secure and safe multinational society will remain unrealized.

In order to achieve lasting peace in the region, we must find a comprehensive solution for the question of Kosovo and Metohija. Reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians calls for difficult decisions and compromise by both sides.

The meetings held thus far in Brussels and the demonstrated readiness to achieve compromise are proof of the commitment of the Republic of Serbia to building confidence between the two sides. My country will continue to cooperate in good faith, at both the technical and the political levels. With a lasting solution for sustainable peace based on mutually acceptable compromises as its ultimate goal, Serbia is committed to moving towards its European future and to the process designed to bring about lasting peace between Serbs and Albanians.

After years of conflict and tension in the Balkans, our region has yet to enter a new era of cooperation, confidence-building and dialogue. The Republic of Serbia is strongly committed to the continuation of the process of reconciliation as a key element necessary for the establishment of regional peace and stability.

However, strong political will is of the utmost importance for there to be tangible and sustainable development of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, as is political courage and readiness on the part of all participants in the dialogue to achieve compromise. Serbia is fully committed to the

success of that dialogue; it is not ready, however, for humiliation and double standards. I do hope, however, that the dialogue in Brussels, with the support of the international community, will bring about a just, lasting and sustainable solution, and that we will all turn towards the future.

In conclusion, I wish to underline that Serbia's readiness to participate in the dialogue does not mean that it will change its principled position on the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo. The dialogue is status-neutral. Any agreement reached in Brussels will not lead to the Republic of Serbia's recognition of the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo. We would like to convey that message to all the countries that have not recognized the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo, as well as to thank them for their principled and consistent position.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Prime Minister Dačić for his statement.

I now give the floor to Mr. Thaçi.

Mr. Thaçi (*spoke in Albanian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): It is my pleasure to address the Security Council today concerning the latest developments in the Republic of Kosovo. Allow me to begin by expressing my great gratitude for the ongoing efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on behalf of peace and progress in Kosovo and the Balkans.

Before turning to the main points of my statement — namely, the progress made in Kosovo since the previous reporting period and in consolidating Kosovo's statehood — allow me to recall to the Council that, just a few weeks ago, Kosovo's citizens and institutions solemnly commemorated the fifth anniversary of our declaration of independence. In that time, Kosovo has made considerable progress in many areas. Full credit for this achievement goes to the people of the Republic of Kosovo, who were able to overcome the effects of years of systematic repression and ethnic cleansing and look forward to a prosperous future.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our highest appreciation to all the States and other international actors who contributed greatly to our democracy, freedom and progress. Let us not forget, in this respect, the leading role of the United States of America, all the States members of the European Union and NATO and all the countries worldwide that have proudly recognized the Republic of Kosovo and

thus enabled Kosovo to take its rightful place among the free nations of the world. Special acknowledgment goes to the United Nations, whose support was crucial, first in building independent institutional structures in Kosovo from 1999 to 2007; then in facilitating negotiations for a final settlement of Kosovo's status from 2005 to 2007 and former President Ahtisaari's package as a constitutional and political reflection of modern Kosovo; and finally, confirming the legality of the declaration of independence of the Republic of Kosovo through the affirmative advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 22 July 2010.

Thus began a new chapter in the history of the newest State in Europe — a State with a difficult past marked by many sacrifices, but with the intention of being an equal player in the democratic world, a prosperous, developed, fair, safe State of which future generations can be proud, regardless of their race, ethnicity or religion.

On this fifth anniversary of independence, the State of Kosovo has become stronger, thanks to the end of international supervision and the assumption by the institutions and citizens of Kosovo of responsibility for all matters. That is additional proof of the State-building maturity of the citizens of Kosovo. Kosovo, as an independent and sovereign State, is a reality that has already been accepted and has become a factor of peace and stability by contributing to regional and international processes. Despite its difficult birth as a State, Kosovo is one of the most successful examples of state-building in the history of the United Nations, and the result of conscience and international justice. Kosovo's independence is as the result, on the one hand, of the combination of continuous efforts of the sacrifice of the people of Kosovo for freedom and dignity, and on the other, of the contribution and support of the international community to end the chapter of the violent breakup of the former Yugoslavia.

The consolidation of Kosovo's statehood is tangible. Kosovo is now recognized by more than half of United Nations Member States, and the spread of its recognition has proven to be irreversible. Many other countries are in the process of recognizing Kosovo's statehood and independence, and I can assure them that that is the most just decision they can make for Kosovo and its citizens. I recall that these recognitions and other recognitions to follow derive from our right to statehood, confirmed by the International Court of Justice in The Hague, from the constructive role Kosovo

plays in strengthening peace and stability in the Balkan region, and from our commitment to the implementation of the Ahtisaari plan and the protection of minorities in accordance with the highest international standards.

In this respect, after joining the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development on 27 February, the Republic of Kosovo has become a member of the Regional Cooperation Council, an umbrella organization for regional cooperation in South-East Europe that has 46 members. With this membership, the Republic of Kosovo has embarked upon an irreversible path towards integration into the European Union, because the Regional Cooperation Council — as successor to the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe is the main instrument of pre-accession into the European Union. Kosovo will have the same rights of representation, voting and signing as all other States members of that Council. In addition, Kosovo will benefit in terms of the social and institutional strengthening of its human potential, and will enjoy the support of a number of social and economic initiatives, including investment facilities, development initiatives for small- and medium-sized enterprises, trade liberalization, improvements in public health, social dialogue and other reforms.

In terms of accession to international organizations, let me inform the Council that on 22 January the Council of Europe adopted a resolution paving the way for the establishment of direct formal relations with the Republic of Kosovo. The resolution allows direct cooperation, especially in the key areas of human rights, freedom of expression and the protection of cultural heritage. That act is important because it will directly strengthen the rule of law. Furthermore, the Assembly of Kosovo will be able to directly monitor the work of the Assembly of the Council of Europe. As of today, 34 of the 47 members of the Council of Europe have recognized the Republic of Kosovo.

Internal developments in Kosovo have been characterized by political and economic stability. Let me emphasize that Kosovo continues to maintain financial stability and sustainable economic growth despite the ongoing global crisis. Moreover, a free market economy and market security for foreign investors are important foundations for increasing the welfare of the citizens of Kosovo.

As indicated in the annex to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/72), Kosovo has undertaken

significant judicial reforms that came into force on 1 January through legislation such as the Law on Courts, the new Criminal Code and the new Criminal Procedure Code. Those reforms are compatible with European standards and as such are aimed at strengthening the sustainability of the judicial and prosecutorial sector in Kosovo, in full cooperation with European expertise.

In the context of the war on corruption, on 11 February a law was enacted by the Assembly to increase powers to seize assets gained from criminal acts. A law for the prevention of money-laundering and terrorist financing has also been adopted by the Assembly. The Assembly of Kosovo also approved a new anti-corruption strategy on 11 February. By late 2012, strategies and action plans had been adopted for the fight against organized crime, terrorism and drug trafficking, and on integrated border management.

Considerable progress has been made in relation to the protection of cultural and religious heritage. On 12 February, the Government of Kosovo, and in particular the Ministry of Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning, signed an administrative instruction for the establishment of an implementation and monitoring council. The establishment of the council provides for more focused monitoring of Serbian religious and cultural heritage institutions, and is among the priorities derived from the feasibility study for the start of negotiations on the Stabilization and Association Agreement. It also contributes to the normalization of relations between the institutions of Kosovo and the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo.

The implementation and monitoring council will assist and monitor the implementation of the legal provisions of the Republic of Kosovo regarding the protection of Serbian religious and cultural heritage in Kosovo, including in particular the provisions of the Law on Special Protected Areas, the Historic Centre of Prizren and Hoçë e Madhe Village. The council, set up by the legislation of the Republic of Kosovo and supported by the President Ahtisaari package, is co-chaired by the Government, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Serbian Orthodox Church. This year, my Government has allocated an initial €100,000 for the operation of that mechanism. The European Union and the United States of America have welcomed the overall progress.

Through the Ministry of Communities and Returns, Kosovo's Government has continued to provide financial support for initiatives aimed at the return and reintegration of minorities in Kosovo. Building houses is a clear example of the ongoing efforts of the Republic of Kosovo to accommodate returnees of different communities — providing decent living conditions that will, in turn, have a positive effect on other aspects of life, such as employment, health and education. Kosovo's institutions have responded to the demands of the vulnerable by strengthening its policy and strategy on internally displaced persons and returnees and by creating more favourable conditions for sustainable return and reintegration. In recent months, the Republic of Kosovo has built or repaired 76 houses for returnees in all regions. In the same period, the Government completed 21 infrastructure projects in minority returnee communities. All those investments contribute to stabilizing the socioeconomic situation in Kosovo's ethnic minority communities. Finally, we have taken steps to facilitate the return from Montenegro of persons displaced from Kosovo.

In addition, Kosovo has taken serious measures to integrate Serbs living in northern Kosovo. However, unfortunately, the destructive practices of parallel structures have been a constant obstacle and have undermined our good intentions and commitment to socioeconomic investment in that part of Kosovo.

To date, the administrative office in northern Mitrovica opened by the Government of the Republic of Kosovo has provided services for more than 2,000 members of the Serb community living in the north. That is further proof that even in the north of the country there can be space for cooperation and integration. We believe that the office will be beneficial to the local population, because it is intended to improve their living conditions by providing better local services, generating employment and coordinating donor assistance planned for investments in the north of Kosovo.

Unfortunately, the office has been targeted several times by unidentified groups in the north. Recently, violent attacks against senior officials of Serbian nationality at the institution have increased, leaving the operation of the office vulnerable to threats and acts of violence, which prevent it from carrying out its daily administrative services. In addition, at least 20 other incidents have occurred in the north during the past three months. We have evidence to suspect that Serbian parallel structures are behind those criminal acts,

which aim to intimidate officials working at the office and to prevent the Serbs from the north from taking advantage of the services offered to them.

We call on Serbia to dismantle those illegal security and justice structures and to stop trying to create tensions in Kosovo. We are not alone in making that call, which is supported by a large number of countries that have invested a great deal for the sake of peace and stability in Kosovo, as well as by the United Nations.

In addition to dividing Serbs in the south from those in the north, the use of fear tactics in the situation in the northern municipalities is preventing the north's integration into Kosovo's institutions. That criminal tendency reminds me of a terrible case just a couple of years ago where the current Deputy Chairman of the Assembly of Kosovo, Petar Miletić, was shot and injured, and, due to that violent pressure, was forced to migrate from northern Mitrovica. Therefore, for the past 13 years, all the communities in that part of Kosovo have been at constant risk due to the absence of the rule of law and the resulting anarchy.

In addition, on 19 March a Kosovo police officer was attacked in the municipality of Leposavić. A powerful explosion occurred near the gate of the police station, causing considerable material damage. Such orchestrated attacks are intended to keep the security situation tense, not giving a chance to peace and the rule of law.

I must again draw the Council's attention to the fact that, as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General, the situation in the three northern municipalities continues to be a serious source of instability in Kosovo, as well as a serious threat to the entire security structure of our region. This difficult situation, which aims to destabilize the functioning of the State of Kosovo, is in complete violation of international norms and resolution 1244 (1999). This situation must be stopped as soon as possible.

Our offer to every citizen, regardless of ethnicity, is simple and clear: our State is our common future, and we will build it for our common good and for the benefit of those of our citizens in the municipalities in the north of Kosovo whose lives continue to be held hostage by certain groups. The establishment of the rule of law and order in the northern part of the territory of the Republic of Kosovo is essential for its development within the framework of the Constitution and the laws

of the country, and for peace, safety and welfare of our citizens of the Serb community.

I want to believe that my counterpart from Serbia, Prime Minister Đačić, is deeply concerned for the rule of law in the north of Kosovo and that the Serbian community living there develops normally and without fear.

The freedom of movement remains one of the main challenges in that part of the territory of Kosovo. Not only are orchestrated barricades physical barriers but, above all, they send political messages about ethnic divisions. Even the international presence — the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) — are denied the freedom of movement, leaving them unable to fulfil their missions. We witnessed similar scenarios in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia during the war in the 1990s. I would like to reassure the Council, however, that Kosovo will not be a place of divisions and barricades. We will not allow the building of a new Republika Srpska.

I have full confidence that the physical barricades that are set up on various roads in the north to prevent free movement will be removed voluntarily by the citizens who live there. Self-isolation does not bring about progress; obstruction of the freedom of movement should not be a value promoted by Serbia. Unfortunately, the role of Serbia continues to be destructive by unlawfully using and operating illegal structures in Kosovo, thereby further aggravating the political and security situation.

In that context, on the occasion of the Orthodox New Year this January, there was an incident between the Kosovo Police — as the only legitimate and legal force — and 10 members of illegal structures — the so-called Civil Defence Corps — who were supposedly engaged to protect a Serbian Government official, Alexander Vulin, during his visit to the municipality of Gracanica.

In that case, the Kosovo Police was hampered in the performance of its official duty to protect public order and severely provoked. As a result, they accompanied the 10 individuals to the police station in Gracanica on suspicion that they had ignored lawful orders of the police. Those individuals had been escorted to the police station in order to enable the police to carry out their security duties and responsibilities. The action was thus taken for the security of the Serbian official. Despite

the tendency to politicize the case and allow the media to echo allegations of ethnic abuse, the decision of the Kosovo police was fair and legitimate. In connection with the occurrence, I would refer the Council to the accurate and constructive reporting by the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, contained in one of the annexes to the report of the Secretary-General, "No complaints about their treatment by Kosovo police were made on either occasion" (S/2013/72, annex 1, p. 14).

After the removal of the Albanian martyrs monument in the Preševo valley on 20 January by numerous Serb gendarmerie forces, an emotional and violent reaction broke out, with unidentified individuals demolishing Serbian Orthodox cemeteries and Second World War memorials in eight locations in Kosovo. The Kosovo Government, local civil society and the international presence condemned those incidents, and the Kosovo police arrested a number of suspects and is committed to pursuing an effective investigation of those cases. My Government has allocated €97,000 for the swift repair of damaged graves and monuments. I assure the Council that we are not dealing with coordinated actions here. I am also pleased by the immediate response of law enforcement officials and the public condemnation of the acts by the Kosovo leadership.

As to the allegations of war crimes in Kosovo that are contained in the report of the Secretary-General, we are sure that addressing those charges will confirm the purity and justness of the war waged by our people in their quest for freedom and independence. While the Serbian State has so far failed to issue a formal apology for its regime-sponsored human rights abuses and ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, we welcome the statement made by Yugoslav army general Dragoljub Ojdanić to the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in January, in which he admitted to having committed war crimes against Kosovo Albanians in the 1990s. His admission constitutes an important recognition that violence was acceptable to and orchestrated by the Serbian authorities at the time, a fact which had already been recognized and documented by the United Nations. We encourage other institutions in Serbia to acknowledge the crimes committed in Kosovo and allow for the telling and documenting of the truth. That would obviously be a strong foundation and a breakthrough moment for reconciliation and coexistence.

In that context, on 18 March my Government created a working group to address the past and

reconciliation. The formation of the group had been postponed until such time as we felt that our society was capable of dealing with the past in one way or other, in order to restore relations, seek and face the truth, and demand reparations for war damages as is generally provided for by criminal justice systems. Because we do not have normal relations with Serbia, the process of dealing with and facing the past has become even more difficult. Nevertheless, the Government of the Republic of Kosovo believes that we have to deal with the past, taking into account the rights and status of each victim of the war. However, we also believe that the signing of a peace treaty regulating relations between Kosovo and Serbia would have to include a Serbian apology, compensation for war damages, and truth on the issue of missing persons and other issues related to the war. That would help create an environment more conducive to facing the past and dealing with outstanding issues.

The Republic of Kosovo has entered into a political dialogue with Serbia brokered by the European Union, which has been brilliantly managed by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton. Of course, the process has been strongly supported by all the world's democracies, which are interested in contributing to peace and stability. The dialogue is aimed at normalizing relations between Kosovo and Serbia, and is considered to be the main tool for integrating the Serb population in northern Kosovo into the country's social and institutional life of Kosovo by offering them opportunities to improve their lives and providing them with security, public services, the rule of law, economic stewardship and democratic governance.

Based on the current rate of normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, I remain reservedly optimistic that by resolving practical, technical and inter-State issues, we are fulfilling key prerequisites that will lead us to the next stage of mutual recognition. Of course, this is not at all an easy process; indeed, it is extremely difficult for Kosovo and Serbia because the bitterness of the past remains fresh. But let me assure the Council that the process could succeed with a minimum of political will coming from Serbia. I therefore once again invite Serbia to be reasonable and rational and seize the opportunity before us to reach an agreement for normalization of relations between our countries. Success in such a dialogue would benefit both countries and above all our citizens. If the dialogue succeeds, there will be no losers — only winners.

At the same time, Kosovo intends to make progress in its relationship with the European Union by accelerating its process of European integration and coordinating joint efforts to fulfil the requirements for membership. We are also engaged in dialogue to heighten our international profile by obtaining more recognitions of our Statehood and memberships in international organizations, including our legitimate request for membership in the United Nations.

Our commitment to dialogue with Serbia is in accordance with General Assembly resolution 64/298 and the relevant resolution of the Assembly of Kosovo, and in full compliance with the Constitution and laws of Kosovo. In the dialogue with Serbia, there can be no negotiation on the sovereignty, political status or territorial integrity of Kosovo. The international support for those inviolable red lines is very important to us.

There is no doubt that the Ahtisaari plan sponsored by the United Nations remains the most generous offer possible, providing the Serbs in Kosovo with a broad space for self-governance and the ability to exercise their political, socioeconomic and cultural rights. The Ahtisaari plan provides the Serbs in the north, inter alia, with broad local self-governance, the right to use their mother tongue in all public affairs, freedom of media, freedom of education at the primary, secondary and university levels, the opportunity for an overhaul of the health-care system, financial and local fiscal management, and the right to select local police leadership, establish associations in Kosovo Serb majority municipalities, and maintain special ties with other municipalities in Serbia. The Ahtisaari plan is thus a very liberal and generous plan that offers a wide range of self-governance capacities to minorities, as has been proven by effective decentralization since our independence five years ago, which resulted in increased political participation of Serbs in Kosovo, growing inter-ethnic stability and improved social welfare.

In the dialogue process with Serbia, we have held seven rounds of meetings since October 2012. Significant results have been achieved so far, which gives hope for a successful conclusion of the process. We are now nearly at the final stage of the process. Unfortunately, over the past three months the Serbian side has come up with a platform that demands territorial autonomy for Kosovo Serbs and the creation of a separate entity in Kosovo. Similarly, Serbia later proposed an association, or

community association, in Kosovo Serb municipalities that would have legislative and executive powers and be the result of direct elections. That proposal is another failed effort to create a third level of government in Kosovo. That is against our constitutional order, which has been built together with our international partners. We are very concerned that such proposals are aimed at creating a new Republika Srpska in Kosovo, which would make Kosovo non-functional and unstable, complicate the internal political consensus, cause the process of our European integration and the integration of minorities in Kosovo to stagnate, undermine the process of successful decentralization in Kosovo, antagonize the majority population and undercut all of the international political and economic investments made in the past 14 years. That idea cannot be put into practice in Kosovo.

We are witness to the fact that such arrangements in the region have become structural obstacles to peace and ethnic reconciliation, democracy, a multi-ethnic citizenry and effective governance. It is important to emphasize the international commitment and determination with respect to the fact that a change of borders in the Western Balkans or any tendency towards territorial rearrangement could destabilize the region, cause ethnic divisions to flare up and create other problems.

The agreements reached so far in the context of the technical and political dialogue are very important, because they address issues that have preoccupied us for a long time and made the lives of our citizens difficult. The regional cooperation agreement allows for Kosovo's independent representation in organizations and at regional events, and does away with ambiguities and indirect representation. The agreement on the opening of a liaison office and the exchange of liaison officers opens an initial chapter in the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Kosovo and Serbia as two independent countries and good neighbours.

The agreement on customs stamps supercedes informal arrangements, establishes proper governance in the area of customs and increases the economic benefits to Kosovo and Serbia. The agreement on the return of civil registry and cadastral books will enable the resolution of property disputes.

Finally, the agreement on the recognition of university diplomas allows for more youth employment.

It is a fact that in this historic process, Serbia has gradually accepted the legitimacy and constitutionality of the Republic of Kosovo.

The Supreme Court of Kosovo cadastral agreement has been accepted as the final authority. Concerning vehicle registration plates, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kosovo has been accepted as the final authority, just as Kosovo customs is the final authority in the area of customs.

In the current dialogue, Kosovo has proved to be more consistent, more responsible and more decisive in the implementation of the agreements reached. We have taken all of the necessary political and technical measures for the implementation of the agreements reached so far. We have also expressed a willingness to increase economic investments in this part of Kosovo.

Unfortunately, Serbia has not shown the same level of readiness, as evidenced by the many delays in and obstacles to the implementation of the agreements reached. Serbia is still trying to prevent Kosovo from participating in regional events.

The agreement on free movement is hampered by the barriers placed in the north of Kosovo, which, unfortunately, are directed from Belgrade. The return of cadastral and civil registry documents is being unjustifiably delayed.

The agreement on the opening of liaison offices and the exchange of liaison officers, which has not yet been implemented, represents a significant step towards the establishment of diplomatic relations between two independent countries.

Other issues that remain unresolved in the context of this dialogue are the fate of those persons who went missing during the war in Kosovo, with 1,700 still missing; the issue of energy and telecommunications; and the dismantling of Serbia's illegal parallel structures in the field of security, which operate in the north of Kosovo in violation of international law.

We rightfully expect dedication and determination from Serbia as concerns the full implementation of the agreements, as well as the immediate dismantling of its structures in Kosovo. We assure the Council that the Republic of Kosovo will play a constructive role in this dialogue, as it has done in the past, in accordance with the Constitution and our laws and with goodwill, so as to improve the lives of citizens and reach an agreement to normalize our relations with Serbia that

further strengthens and consolidates our statehood and international recognition.

The Republic of Kosovo has proved and continues to prove that it embraces European values. The European agenda of my country has already become a working plan for society as a whole, considering that EU integration is an incentive to achieve the most important goals of our society: political stability, respect for human rights and the development of a sustainable economy. The European agenda is a reform agenda, not just integration. That process did not start yesterday; since the Thessaloniki summit of 2003, Kosovo has had its own independent path in relation to EU integration.

Kosovo has already entered an important period as a country, with significant advancements in many fields, bringing Kosovo into the focus of the EU enlargement policy. That has been done as a result of the reforms carried out and the comprehensive support and determination shown across the political spectrum and by the citizens of the Republic of Kosovo. I am honoured to represent a society where integration into the EU and NATO has more than 90 per cent of public support; it is maintaining that support at a much higher level in relation to other countries.

The European Commission has confirmed that our country has made significant progress on the road to EU membership, emphasizing the fact that Kosovo is ready to open negotiations on the Stabilization and Association Agreement, with the short-term fulfilment of specific criteria in the areas of the rule of law, public administration, the protection of minorities and trade. That joint success was reaffirmed recently by the visit of the EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, Mr. Štefan Füle, in Pristina.

Above all, the Republic of Kosovo is making great strides towards the establishment of contractual relations with the European Union. With the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, we are taking the first, very important step on the road to membership in and full integration into the Union.

The Stabilization and Association Agreement will also enable Kosovo to have a long-term perspective for sustainable economic development, improving Kosovo's trade position and providing stability for foreign investors. That will have a significant impact on the advancement of democratic processes, the promotion of internal reforms and the deepening of

mutual political and economic cooperation between Kosovo and the European Union.

In that context, we welcome the European Parliament draft resolution on Kosovo dated 11 February 2013. In particular, we consider it very important that the draft resolution encourages the five remaining EU countries that did not recognize Kosovo's independence to do so; rejects Kosovo's territorial division; affirms the spirit of the Ahtisaari package and emphasizes that that plan is an adequate platform to resolve disputes in the North; welcomes the end of the supervised independence of Kosovo in September of last year; welcomes the greater participation of Kosovo's representation in international organizations and initiatives; welcomes the Pristina-Belgrade dialogue agreements reached to date; and condemns the acts of violence in northern Kosovo and the deviant behavior of the local groups.

In addition, Kosovo is advancing in the process of visa liberalization for its citizens. My Government is very much committed to this process being completed quickly, so that the people of Kosovo can come out of the isolation that they have been in for more than two decades and move freely, like the other peoples of the Balkans. Kosovo's Government has proved that it is able to make progress on the criteria set by the European Commission, including in the areas of readmission; reintegration; document security; integrated border management; migration management; asylum; the prevention and combating of organized crime, corruption and terrorism; international cooperation on law enforcement; judicial cooperation in criminal matters; data protection; and the fundamental right to freedom of movement.

I should like to make it clear, however, that any asymmetry that puts an additional burden on Kosovo to implement new criteria that is not required of other Western Balkan countries would hurt its image and the credibility of the process. Kosovo has not even a day to waste, because decades have already been lost as a result of apartheid and conflict. Above all, we call upon the European Union to foster internal unity in Kosovo, without further hindrance to our deserved integration.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate that the Western Balkans has no room for conflict or belligerent policies aimed at violating territorial integrity at any cost since the violent break-up of the former Yugoslavia. Efforts to create frozen conflicts by destabilizing the region are doomed to failure. The Republic of Kosovo

has encoded its Constitution to reflect that it has no territorial claim against anyone.

Finally, I recall that Kosovo is one of the most successful instances of State-building and peacebuilding in United Nations history and in international governance more generally. Resolution 1244 (1999) has been implemented for a long time. We have implemented the Ahtisaari plan, resulting in the successful conclusion of international supervision last September. To date, Kosovo has been recognized by more than half of the United Nations Member States and is a member of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, as well as many other regional and international initiatives. Kosovo is in the process of integration into the European Union as a full member among all others. Kosovo has installed a democratic Government, built a multi-ethnic society and is maintaining sustainable economic growth.

The Republic of Kosovo has been internationally recognized, which should be welcomed by all Security Council members. Moreover, we rightfully anticipate that in the near future, given developments in Kosovo and the region, and in particular our conviction that Kosovo and Serbia will normalize inter-State relations as a result of the dialogue process, the Security Council will draft and adopt a new resolution making Kosovo an equal, peace-loving Member of the United Nations capable of maintaining order and assuming its international responsibilities.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Kayinamuna (Rwanda): Allow me to express my appreciation to Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, for his leadership and commitment to the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and his efforts to implement its mandate in Kosovo.

I also thank Mr. Ivica Dačić and Mr. Hashim Thaçi for their statements. Their presence today in the Council demonstrates their political will and courage to embark on the difficult yet indispensable process of working together in order to normalize the relationship between the two capitals.

When we look at the history of the issue at hand, the trail we see is one of a bitter past and bitter memories. However, in Rwanda we believe that it is in the common

interest of both parties to turn the page on that part of their history and continue with serious negotiations to bring peace and lasting security in the region. In the same spirit, it is our hope that both leaders will make further progress on the outstanding issues, mainly those concerning northern Kosovo, and reach an agreement in view of the upcoming meeting on 2 April.

Both leaders have made important strides. In that respect, we hope that the international community, in particular the Council, will be well prepared to mobilize resources and political backing to encourage both leaders to reach a sustainable agreement leading to lasting peace.

With reference to the report that is before the Council (S/2013/72), it notes the positive developments in Kosovo, and we acknowledge that the situation has been relatively calm. However, the ongoing tensions in northern Kosovo are worrisome and could spark intercommunal violence, which would cause lasting harm to peace and security and even the agreements that have been reached. I acknowledge that improvement has been seen in the Kosovo police, which has taken ownership in the provision of law and order and addressed the concerns of its citizens through increased participation of the municipal community safety councils.

In addition, we welcome the collaboration between UNMIK and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo in helping the Ministry of Justice to implement reform of the justice sector. We also welcome the cooperation between UNMIK and other international organizations, as manifested in the work achieved. We encourage the international community to maintain its commitment and increase its support to enable those organizations to achieve their mandates. I also remain convinced that the task of building a stable and prosperous region will need both leaders to come together and negotiate a lasting solution.

To conclude, my delegation believes that achieving peace in the region lies within the hands of the two countries; it is therefore crucial that both parties demonstrate political will and a sincere desire to continue through dialogue to bring about a lasting peace.

Mr. Menan (Togo) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to thank Mr. Zarif for introducing the quarterly report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/72) on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

(UNMIK). I also thank the Prime Minister of Serbia and Mr. Hashim Thaçi for their statements.

I will principally address the issues related to the still precarious security situation in northern Kosovo, and those related to normalizing relations between Kosovo and Serbia. For nearly two years, under the auspices of the European Union (EU), the Serbian and Kosovar authorities have undertaken a process aimed at normalizing their relations. My country welcomes the progress made since then. It is noteworthy that, at the technical level, the dialogue has led to an agreement aimed at improving the daily lives of the people in both territories, whose existence has been roiled by the political and legal stalemate.

Both sides have therefore agreed on arrangements, in particular the exchange of liaison officers, in order to improve communications and the joint management of crossing points. They have agreed on a customs regime involving the recognition of documents including vehicle registration plates, identification documents and university diplomas from Kosovo. My country is convinced that such initiatives will promote the rapprochement of the people of Kosovo and Serbia by promoting increased exchanges between both territories and by addressing the daily tensions arising from coexistence.

The dialogue undertaken has gradually evolved from technical to policy issues in recent months, which we welcome. We commend the positive momentum made possible by the mediation efforts of the European Union and highlighted by the recent high-level meetings in Brussels on 6 February between the President of Serbia and the leader of Kosovo, and between their Prime Ministers on 19 and 20 February. Togo welcomes the resolve reaffirmed by the senior officials at those meetings to normalize relations between Serbia and Kosovo.

The powerful symbol of the normalization process represented by those meetings is encouraging, given that only a few months earlier their positions were so rigid that such meetings between senior Serbian and Kosovar officials could scarcely have been imagined. Still, beyond the symbolic aspect, Togo hopes that the momentum will continue in order to bring about a rapid settlement to the sensitive and complex issue of the maintenance of parallel Serbian structures in northern Kosovo, and ultimately of the final status of Kosovo. To that end, we urge both sides to be much more open

and flexible with a view to a win-win solution in the interests of the Serbian and Kosovar populations and to promote peace and stability in the region.

Togo also remains concerned about the inter-ethnic tensions still evident in northern Kosovo, in particular in North Mitrovica, which risk jeopardizing reconciliation efforts. In December 2012 and in January, there was an increase in the number of demonstrations condemning, in particular, certain aspects of the agreement on the integrated management of crossing points, the building of housing for repatriated Albanians in North Mitrovica and restrictions on the freedom of movement of Serbian senior officials to Kosovo. That led to the Serbian President cancelling his visit to Gračanica monastery in January.

Such developments attest to the ongoing inter-ethnic strife and the limited positive response locally to reconciliation initiatives. Togo believes that there must be a particular focus on the local impact of the reconciliation process. In that regard, we call on the religious authorities and the civil society of Serbia and Kosovo to become more involved in bringing together the various communities. In that regard, we commend the example of the dialogue between the Orthodox Church in Kosovo and the municipal authorities in Pejë on a range of practical issues.

The lack of security undermines efforts to bring the Serbian and Kosovar communities together. It has a negative impact on the decision of displaced persons and refugees from northern Kosovo whether or not to return and reintegrate. Togo therefore urges the Kosovo authorities to continue the investigations under way into the cases of attacks against the Serbian residents of Kosovo and their property in order to bring to justice the perpetrators of such acts and to provide the necessary compensation to victims.

On the issue of disappeared persons, my country welcomes the visit to Cyprus on 7 and 8 November 2012 of members of the Kosovo Serb family associations of missing persons, who were able to learn from the experience of Cyprus in that area. We look forward to the rapid implementation of the recommendations arising from that visit, which underscore the importance of ownership of such activities by the populations themselves and of the involvement of family associations in all discussions and decisions on the issue.

Togo is also concerned about the phenomenon of corruption and organized crime that are developing

widely, in particular in northern Kosovo. We call on the Kosovo authorities to do their utmost to fight effectively against that scourge. We note the decision taken by the Kosovo authorities in that regard, as stated by Mr. Thaçi. We believe that the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) should have the appropriate staffing in order to further focus on preventing and suppressing that scourge.

Moreover, with regard to the allegations of trafficking in human organs, we again call on Kosovo and its neighbours to allow the EULEX Special Investigative Task Force to work in peace and to fully cooperate with it. We hope that the investigations undertaken by Prosecutor Williamson can be rapidly concluded in as impartial a way as possible in order to once and for all shed light on that case, which is dividing peoples and views.

I would like to conclude by reiterating my country's congratulations to the European Union, UNMIK, the Kosovo Force, EULEX, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and all partner organizations that continue to work alongside the Kosovo authorities in order to prevent tension and to promote the adoption of consensus solutions by playing an important role in mediation and in facilitating dialogue.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his report on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2013/72). We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, for presenting the report and Mr. Ivica Dačić and Mr. Hashim Thaçi for their statements.

The Secretary-General's report once again affirms that the United Nations continues to play an essential role in guaranteeing stability and neutrality in Kosovo and the region. We reaffirm the primacy of resolution 1244 (1999) as the legal framework applicable in Kosovo, as well as the importance of full respect for international law.

During the reporting period, we note the progress in the dialogue between the parties. We congratulate them not only on the level of the dialogue but also on its quality, which has moved from a primarily technical level to a political one, providing new prospects for resolving several long-standing problems. The Secretary-General's report also points out that, despite the developments in the high-level dialogue, incidents and tensions on the ground continue to occur. It is

therefore important that the results of the dialogue have a positive impact on the reality on the ground, in particular in the north.

In that regard, we regret that the parties were unable to reach an agreement with regard to the situation in northern Kosovo at the recent round of talks on 20 March in Brussels. We encourage the parties to continue those efforts, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999), at the next round, to be held on 2 April.

Northern Kosovo remains a source of concern to my delegation. With regard to the security situation, we note that to date this year there have been more than 20 incidents using explosive devices. The report documents serious incidents that also affected the staff of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). It also reports on the arrests and mistreatment of Kosovo Serbs during the Christmas celebrations on 7 January. It is important that the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), the Kosovo Force and the local authorities investigate each of those incidents. We are pleased that those entities have increased their visibility and prevention activities in response to such incidents.

In addition, we are concerned about the situation of the administrative office in Mitrovica. We regret the freeze on the payment of salaries from the Kosovo budget to the employees of that office. Given the important work that UNMIK is doing to ensure coordination and cooperation among the international presences in the north, it is necessary to find solutions to enable its administration to continue to carry out its prevention, mediation and facilitation functions.

On that same point, we would like to comment in general terms on the importance of UNMIK having the necessary resources to achieve its operational capacity and to implement its mandate. UNMIK operates in a vulnerable situation with limited resources. A strong United Nations presence with the appropriate resources remains necessary given the prevailing situation on the ground, in particular in northern Kosovo.

We were surprised by the information the Security Council has received about refusals to allow Serbian authorities to enter Kosovo, including the recent hostile treatment of the Director of the Serbian Office for Kosovo and Metohija. Such behaviour has an adverse impact on the situation of minority communities in Kosovo. It is worth recalling that UNMIK's goal is to promote security, stability and respect for human rights

in Kosovo, with the participation of all its communities. Kosovo's multi-ethnic character will be undermined by the lack of mechanisms capable of assuring and protecting the rights of those populations. Moreover, it has a negative effect on the rate of those returning voluntarily to Kosovo.

Turning to the work of the Special Investigative Task Force in addressing the allegations of inhumane treatment of persons and trafficking in human organs, we note with interest the information included in the annexed EULEX report and have followed progress on the matter closely. We support the objectives of operational cooperation and therefore continue to believe that it would be desirable to reach an arrangement that could involve the United Nations in the process of investigating the allegations. We agree on the importance of tackling impunity and ensuring accountability.

We conclude by affirming that beyond the high-level political process, it is equally important that sustained and well-funded efforts be made to promote reconciliation and build trust among the communities. In that regard, we support the Special Representative's efforts to promote consensus solutions and expand cooperation among the principal stakeholders.

Mr. Bouchaara (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo, for his briefing on recent developments in Kosovo. I welcome the presence here and participation of the Prime Minister of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and thank Mr. Hashim Thaçi.

Progress has been made on the situation in Kosovo in various areas, which, while they may be technical, are politically highly symbolic. In fact, the joint agreement on the integrated management of crossing points, the highway construction project and the appointment of liaison officers for the European Union delegation offices are measures that will have a direct effect on Kosovo's communities and their daily life. This progress has been achieved under the auspices of the High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, whose commitment and perseverance enabled high-level talks to be held between the parties. In that context, we encourage the parties to continue to negotiate in a spirit of compromise so as to reach a satisfactory result as quickly as possible. It is predictable and understandable that implementation

of these measures may meet with resistance and create friction, but it is crucial that the leaders on both sides stay the course and move forward by soothing fears and, if necessary, adjusting the arrangements agreed on. The momentum of reconciliation of the various interests and building trust must be maintained and strengthened.

That the progress that has been achieved in this way unquestionably marks an important stage in the negotiation process between the parties should in no way mask the persisting tensions on the ground, particularly in northern Kosovo, where incidents affecting minorities continue to occur. Where these include, in particular, incidents of disrespect for cultural and religious sites, which are still a frequent source of tension, it is essential that a spirit of religious tolerance be maintained and peaceful existence between communities promoted. In that regard, we commend the role of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo in restoring and protecting minority religious sites.

Regarding the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, that body continues to investigate issues connected with organized crime, war crimes and corruption. In that context, the allegations of trafficking in human organs are still extremely worrying.

This region has endured many conflicts that have claimed many victims, who continue to suffer the consequences of war and fratricidal conflict. Today it is up to the parties to continue to strive to resolve their differences and to work towards what we hope will be a prosperous future for the generations to come. In that regard, we commend the commitment and efforts of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force, which continue to play a very important role between the parties with the goal of moving forward on the issues that divide them and, above all, to work towards a political solution that is comprehensive, inclusive and in accord with the provisions of resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing. I welcome the presence of the Prime Minister of Serbia, Mr. Dačić; I have also listened carefully to Mr. Thaçi's statement.

China has always maintained that Serbia's sovereignty and territorial integrity should be fully respected. Resolution 1244 (1999) is an important legal

foundation for addressing the question of Kosovo. That task should be carried out within the framework of the relevant resolutions and through dialogue and negotiation between the parties concerned so as to reach a mutually acceptable solution. China welcomes the many rounds of high-level political dialogue that have been held recently between Belgrade and Pristina and that have made good progress. We hope that both parties will remain committed to promoting constructive dialogue, try to reach agreement on issues in the relevant areas, and seek a lasting solution to the question of Kosovo that will help maintain peace and stability in the Balkans and in Europe generally.

At present, the security situation in Kosovo is generally stable, but in the north tensions remain, and we are very worried about the situation. The parties concerned should adopt a prudent attitude, stick to dialogue to settle their differences and refrain from any action that might worsen the situation. China appreciates the work done by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) under the Special Representative, and supports its continuing efforts to implement the Council's mandate. We hope that UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo Force, the Kosovo and the other international presences will strengthen their coordination in order to ensure that they play a positive and constructive role in settling the relevant issues.

China is very concerned about illegal trafficking in human organs in Kosovo. Any activities contravening international law or international humanitarian standards should be met with zero tolerance. The United Nations should play its part in a comprehensive and independent investigation of such cases.

Mr. Araud (France) (spoke in French): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing and the Prime Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo for their statements.

Naturally, my country remains committed to the reality of a sovereign, peaceful, democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo, living in peace with its neighbours. Our hope therefore is that Serbia and Kosovo can find an agreement that would allow them to definitively close the chapter on their conflict, work towards their European future and contribute to stabilizing the Balkans.

That is why the European Union is promoting dialogue between the two countries; the meeting held on

Wednesday, 20 March, in Brussels has confirmed that we were close to an agreement. That is major progress, and we encourage both sides to finalize discussions by each making the necessary compromises. We thank Mr. Đačić and Mr. Thaçi for the information they have just provided us with respect to the meeting, and we commend their determination to find an agreement.

Thus, considerable progress has been made in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. That dialogue is being held at the level of Heads of Government, and is addressing the most sensitive issues. We offer all our support to the efforts of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy for the European Union, Ms. Catherine Ashton, to promote that dialogue.

We need to move towards a long-term solution on the issue of northern Kosovo. The outlines are known. Serbia must dismantle the parallel structures that it maintains there, and Kosovo, for its part, must provide security assurances and substantial autonomy that would win the acceptance of the Serbian populations concerned, which would entail a degree of decentralization, the scope of which would be agreed upon by both sides.

Parallel to that, it is important that the technical agreements that have been reached be implemented and that an agreement be reached on other issues that have been identified, particularly on energy and telecommunications. If the conditions defined in the conclusions of the European Council of December 2012 are met, we could enter a new phase of the European rapprochement for the two countries, which means the launch of European Union accession talks for Serbia and a stabilization and association agreement for Kosovo.

We call on the authorities of Serbia and of Kosovo to remain committed to this historic process and to prepare the public for concessions in each stage. We know that this is never easy, and we specifically commend the recent courageous statements of the Prime Minister of Serbia and the resolute commitment of Mr. Thaçi to the dialogue, which does not enjoy unanimous support in Kosovo.

On the ground, the security situation in Kosovo remains calm overall, although incidents continue to take place, particularly in the northern part of the country. As is recalled in the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/72), it is critical to consolidate the rights of the different communities within Kosovo, to protect their

cultural and religious heritage, and to guarantee the return of the 18,000 refugees and internally displaced persons in appropriate conditions of security and reintegration.

We firmly condemn the recent desecration of Serbian cemeteries, and any attack against orthodox religious and cultural sites. Such acts must not go unpunished.

With the end of supervised independence and the establishment of the administrative office in northern Mitrovica, it is normal and desirable that the international presence should adapt to the new realities on the ground. We call on all parties to cooperate with international organizations. It is essential that the authorities of Kosovo cooperate actively with the Special Representative of the European Union and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) on the rule of law, especially with respect to the investigation into alleged trafficking of human organs. In that regard, I welcome the fact that EULEX continues to provide to the Security Council information on progress made in this investigation, as provided in the report of the Secretary-General.

We would also like to reiterate that the soldiers and personnel deployed within the Kosovo Force and EULEX are instructed to ensure the respect for the freedom of movement within Kosovo. Any impediment to their own freedom of movement or physical security is unacceptable. At a time when the European Union, NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe are adapting their presence to conditions on the ground, we call on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to do the same in a spirit of subsidiarity in order to contribute to a peaceful evolution of behaviour, in accord with the Kosovo authorities, without letting themselves be used by the defenders of the status quo.

I would like to conclude by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the personnel of the UNMIK in Kosovo for their work.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zarif, for his briefing. I would like to welcome both Prime Minister Dačić and Prime Minister Thaçi back to the Council and to thank them for sharing their perspectives with us.

I would also like to express again our appreciation to the European Union (EU), NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other organizations that, alongside the United Nations, are supporting the international community's work in Kosovo. I would like to congratulate Kosovo on the fifth anniversary of its independence on 17 February.

The United States commends Kosovo and Serbia for their efforts in the ongoing EU-facilitated dialogue towards a normalization of their relations. Prime Ministers Thaçi and Dačić have shown courage in working to resolve long-standing issues through a pragmatic approach that will improve the lives of their citizens, bring greater stability to the region and allow both countries to move forward on their respective paths to European integration.

The United States very much welcomes the progress made in the seven rounds of the dialogue, and we understand that the Prime Ministers are close to concluding an agreement on northern Kosovo. We encourage them to do so at the next dialogue session on 2 April. Both parties, with the assistance of the international community, should quickly and fully implement any agreement ultimately reached. Those efforts will continue to require much cooperation and hard work.

Further, we applaud the continued implementation of the arrangements under the integrated management of crossing points agreement, and look forward to the exchange of liaison officers to serve in the respective capitals. Such agreements are proof that the dialogue is producing results. We call on both Kosovo and Serbia to sustain the momentum towards normalization that their leaders have built in recent months.

We also commend the significant progress Kosovo has made in modernizing the justice sector. The new court structure, criminal code and criminal procedure code are major steps forward. We encourage the Government of Kosovo, in coordination with its partner the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), to continue to prioritize reforms in that sector and to increase efforts to address corruption, strengthen judicial independence and remedy inefficiencies, which would contribute to increased public confidence in the legal system and improved justice.

Kosovo's recent adoption of laws to increase the transparency and accountability of financial transactions will, once fully implemented, help Kosovo

to combat corruption and organized crime, promote the country's growth and help to ensure the independence of its institutions more broadly. Further, we continue to support the Special Investigative Task Force in its work to investigate allegations of organ trafficking and other wrongdoing. We reaffirm our belief in the Task Force's capacity and commitment to operating consistently with established investigative and prosecutorial practices and in the interest of justice.

While the progress at the political level has been significant, the United States remains concerned about continuing security incidents, especially in the north. As the Secretary-General notes in his report (S/2013/72), the overall number of recorded incidents affecting minority communities declined in 2012. Still, we are disturbed by the uptick of violent acts in recent months, much of which appears intended to harass and threaten those who are cooperating with Kosovo authorities to normalize relations. Those acts represent a serious threat to peace and security. They must not be tolerated. Of great concern is a string of grenade attacks in northern Kosovo that has targeted EULEX staff, officials at the borders and Kosovo Serbs.

In addition, an ongoing pattern of violence in northern Mitrovica against personnel employed by Kosovo institutions and their families, particularly against Kosovo Serb employees of the northern Mitrovica administrative office undermines safety, security and the rule of law, and hurts the ordinary citizens of the north, whom that administrative office is trying to help. The United States continues to support the office's work to improve the delivery of services to the citizens of northern Mitrovica, and hopes that UNMIK will support those efforts.

We also insist on zero tolerance for vandalism, the desecration of religious sites, intimidation and targeted violence, and condemn the desecration of grave sites in Kosovo that occurred in reaction to the removal by the Serbian Government of a monument in southern Serbia. The United States welcomed the prompt condemnation and assurances by Kosovo authorities that those criminal acts would be investigated fully and the perpetrators prosecuted, as well as the Government's commitment to restore the grave sites at Government expense.

As the Prime Ministers continue talks under the auspices of High Representative Ashton in less than two weeks, it will be important to seize the opportunities presented by the dialogue to move beyond the past

and look toward their common European futures. The United States will continue to support them and the EU facilitation efforts towards that end.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): As I begin my remarks, allow me to welcome to the Council His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of Serbia, and His Excellency Mr. Hashim Thaçi, Prime Minister of Kosovo. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, for presenting the quarterly report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/72) on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

In his report, the Secretary-General underscores the constructive approach taken and the pragmatism shown by the authorities in Pristina and Belgrade in the high-level political dialogue held under the aegis of the European Union. The most recent session of that dialogue was held the day before yesterday in Brussels, with the participation of the two Prime Ministers. We welcome the progress made at that meeting, and we hope that it will be made concrete at the next meeting, scheduled for 2 April.

Luxembourg firmly supports the efforts by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton, as facilitator of that dialogue. I would like to join the Secretary-General in commending Serbian and Kosovar leaders for having committed themselves to the path of dialogue, which has allowed for concrete results to be achieved on the ground since the most recent debate of the Council on this issue (see S/PV.6872). I would like to note in particular the effective implementation of the agreement on the integrated management of crossing points as it relates to gates 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 31 of the agreement. Those efforts should be continued and the achievements to date consolidated on the ground.

The meeting between the Presidents of Kosovo and Serbia that took place on 6 February in Brussels in the presence of Baroness Ashton, the first since the declaration of independence by Kosovo, was an important step towards the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina.

Much progress towards peace and stability has been made since UNMIK's establishment, in 1999, by virtue of resolution 1244 (1999). The context in which the Mission and the other international missions are operating, including the European Union Rule of Law

Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), has radically changed. The security conditions in Kosovo are evolving in a positive direction. In that regard, the report of the Secretary-General underscores that, on the whole, the security situation is calm, with the exception of the north of Kosovo. In particular, in northern Mitrovica, several serious incidents have been reported, in particular acts of violence against Kosovo Serbs and incidents targeting the personnel, assets and projects of the administrative office put in place by the Kosovar authorities in northern Mitrovica.

We are concerned by the recent acts of vandalism targeting Orthodox religious sites, and we firmly condemn all acts of intolerance. While the total number of incidents affecting minority groups has diminished, there must be a redoubling of efforts to ensure peaceful coexistence between the different population groups in Kosovo. No effort should be spared to minimize tension, particularly in northern Kosovo. In that connection, I commend the work of UNMIK and EULEX in support of the Kosovar authorities, including the participation of EULEX in the recruitment of the new multi-ethnic police unit that will be charged with protecting religious sites.

The European Union is determined to continue its support for Kosovo. The extension of the EULEX mandate through June 2014 will allow the European Union Mission to continue with its capacity-building efforts in the area of the rule of law and help the Kosovar authorities to undertake prosecutions against the authors of war crimes, as well as to step up the fight against corruption and organized crime. We welcome the significant work undertaken by the Special Investigative Task Force of EULEX to consolidate the high-level support it has in all of the countries of the region and to prepare for the operational phase of the investigation into allegations of organ trafficking set out in the report of Council of Europe Special Rapporteur Dick Marty and into the information provided on that subject to the Security Council.

For its part, Luxembourg remains committed to the stability of Kosovo through its participation in the Kosovo Force, to the development of the rule of law through its contribution to EULEX and to the socioeconomic development of the country through a major cooperation programme focused on professional training in the areas of water management and health.

In conclusion, allow me to reaffirm our deeply held conviction that the future of Kosovo, as that of Serbia, must take place in a resolutely European context. My country is prepared to continue to support the efforts of those two countries and their leaders in order to achieve those common objectives.

Mr. Tatham (United Kingdom): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Mr. Farid Zarif, for his briefing today. I am delighted to also welcome to the Council His Excellency Mr. Hashim Thaçi, Prime Minister of Kosovo, and His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of Serbia.

Kosovo continues to make progress, both internally and on the international stage. We encourage those countries that have not yet recognized Kosovo to do so.

The United Kingdom welcomes Kosovo's progress towards meeting the short-term conditionality, set out at the December 2012 European Union (EU) General Affairs Council session, for opening negotiations on the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union. The implementation of the conditionality is crucial for sustainable reform and for Kosovo's continued progress towards a more secure and prosperous future. Active engagement in the EU-facilitated dialogue is vital to Kosovo's EU accession path. In that respect, the United Kingdom welcomes Baroness Ashton's personal engagement and the tangible progress made in the dialogue, particularly with regard to integrated border management. The continued assistance of EULEX in the implementation of dialogue agreements is indispensable. We continue to urge full cooperation with EULEX by the authorities, in both Pristina and Belgrade.

I would like to echo the words of Baroness Ashton by paying tribute to both Prime Ministers for the courage, vision and determination they have shown over the past five months in that dialogue. I also welcome the commitment they have each expressed today to the success of that process. They are on the brink of a historic agreement that will open a new chapter in Serbia/Kosovo relations and ensure that both countries make progress towards the European Union in a more cooperative and stable manner. There is more work to do. It is crucial that an agreement be reached on 2 April and that its implementation begin immediately. Serbia must do all it can to ensure agreements are communicated to, and accepted by, the local communities in northern Kosovo. Kosovo must make greater efforts to show that

it is working in support of the rights and culture of all its minority communities.

The Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2013/72) indicates a reduction in 2012, compared to the previous year, in the overall number of recorded incidents affecting minority communities. We hope that trend will continue and, indeed, intensify. There is of course no room for complacency in that area. The United Kingdom was deeply concerned by the violence in Kosovo that followed the removal of the monument in Presevo in January. Those attacks were completely unacceptable, and it was right for the international community and the Government of Kosovo to universally condemn them. All the perpetrators of those acts should be arrested and brought to justice. In that respect, we welcome the suspension of five police officers in Viti/Vitina who allegedly did not adequately respond to the removal of a monument from the Second World War, and the arrest of five individuals on the suspicion of having desecrated a Serbian Orthodox cemetery. Kosovo must continue to combat illegal activities and violence committed against all of its communities, and must investigate fully when incidents do occur.

While socioeconomic factors remain the overriding consideration for individuals returning to Kosovo, the Government must continue on its commitment to creating the conditions necessary for sustainable returns. The United Kingdom remains committed to the returns process through political engagement and bilateral projects.

The United Kingdom welcomes the comprehensive update in the EULEX annex to the work being carried out by the Special Investigative Task Force. We continue to support the important work carried out into the serious allegations made in the Marty report. We are confident in the Task Force capacity and its determination to take forward this important investigation.

I welcome the update in the Secretary-General's report concerning the high-level round table on the status of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, involving the Kosovo Government, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and other international representatives. I welcome the work of UN-Women in organizing this round table. Initiative preventing and responding to sexual violence are a priority for the Government of the United Kingdom. We will give strong support to efforts that

address the challenge posed by this tragic legacy of past conflict in a number of countries, including Kosovo.

Let me take this opportunity to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zarif for his continuing efforts to drive down the UNMIK budget. At a time when countries across the world are having to face tough decisions regarding cuts to their own national budgets, it is only right that the United Nations and its institutions respond accordingly. I encourage Special Representative Zarif to make further efforts to identify cost savings in the future.

Important though budgetary rigour is, I would not want to end my remarks on that note. Let me re-emphasize the United Kingdom's commitment to the irreversible progress of both Kosovo and Serbia to EU membership. We hope that both deliver on the conditions set out at the December General Affairs Council in order to move forward on their respective EU accession paths. We welcome the continued constructive engagement by both Belgrade and Pristina in the dialogue and look forward to further tangible results.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report (S/2013/72) on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, for his detailed presentation of that report. We welcome the participation today of the Prime Minister of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and of Mr. Hashim Thaçi.

We welcome the fact that the report of the Secretary-General underlines the positive role that the United Nations continues to play in Kosovo through UNMIK, promoting security, stability and respect for human rights, and collaborating with other international actors. Argentina voted in favour of resolution 1244 (1999) when we were member of the Security Council, and believes that it should continue to serve as the international legal basis for achieving a general solution in Kosovo through a fertile political process and fair and specific negotiations.

We cannot fail to welcome the high-level dialogue process between the parties, under the auspices of the European Union, which held its seventh meeting in Brussels just two days ago. We trust that the willingness to engage in constructive dialogue shown by Belgrade and Pristina will contribute to the stabilization of the

situation and the political resolution of the contentious issues.

We welcome the commitment and decision of both parties to promote dialogue as an import factor for building confidence. The efforts of Serbia to promote dialogue and the normalization of relations deserve special recognition. We urge both parties to continue in that spirit, in keeping with resolution 1244 (1999), and hope for a successful outcome of the meeting to be held on 2 April. In that respect, we endorse the Secretary-General's assertion in his report that the resumption of talks is in itself a clear signal that both parties are resolved to maintain peaceful dialogue and overcome the scars of the conflict of the past.

In this context, we believe it crucial that UNMIK continue carrying out its mandate and the important role it plays in complement to dialogue so as to guarantee the effective exchange of information and the presentation of reports to the Council. We support the role of UNMIK and its contribution to stabilizing the region, as well as the cooperation between UNMIK, the Kosovo Force and European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, maintaining a status-neutral position under the auspices of the United Nations.

Argentina has been following closely the financial situation of the United Nations administrative office in Mitrovica. It is unacceptable that a lack of funds is having an adverse impact on its mandate. As the Secretary-General is right to point out, the situation in northern Mitrovica calls for coordinated attention and action in order to ensure that the difficult problems are resolved in good faith so as to avoid future tensions.

This is why, given the important work of UNMIK to ensure coordination and cooperation between international actors with regard to northern Mitrovica within their respective mandates, there is a need to find practical solutions, prevent tension and ensure that its administration continues carrying out conflict prevention, mediation and facilitation functions. We therefore call on UNMIK to continue to be granted the necessary resources to avoid a negative impact on the valuable work it carries out, which deserves our full recognition.

We are concerned that, despite progress in the high-level dialogue, serious incidents and tension continue to occur on the ground, especially in the north. It is therefore crucial for the high-level dialogue to have a positive impact on the ground. We cannot but agree with

the Secretary-General that, in addition to the political process, it is equally important for sustained efforts to be made to promote reconciliation and increase trust between the communities of Kosovo.

For Argentina, strengthening the respect for the human rights of all communities in Kosovo is of fundamental importance, as is bringing an end to acts of intolerance and guaranteeing the swift return of internally displaced persons. In our view, it is of the utmost importance to ensure full respect for the human rights of displaced persons returning to their places of origin, so that they may access and exercise their substantive rights and not fall victim to various forms of violence or discrimination, in particular in cases of undocumented returnees, who remain stateless. We therefore assign great importance to the technical assistance that UNMIK can provide in this context.

It is equally essential to strengthen policies aimed at ending the discrimination suffered by various communities, such as the Roma, Ashkali and small Egyptian communities. The protection of cultural and religious heritage must continue to be a priority for UNMIK. While progress has been made in this area, we remain concerned by the occurrence of vandalism and religious intolerance, which should be firmly and effectively condemned.

We also support and follow closely the work of the EULEX Special Investigative Task Force created in 2011 to investigate reports of the inhumane treatment of people and human organ trafficking in Kosovo. We reaffirm the importance of tackling impunity and ensuring accountability in a framework of cooperation with the United Nations. It is important to underscore the role of EULEX and UNMIK in investigating the crimes committed during the armed conflict, with a view to ending the impunity that persists to this day.

I should like to conclude by once again highlighting the crucial importance of UNMIK's work in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999). We commend Special Representative Farid Zarif for his efforts. We trust that the political dialogue that is now under way will contribute to stability and reconciliation, facilitate consensual solutions and strengthen confidence among Kosovo's community, thereby making possible peaceful progress and lasting prosperity.

Mr. Kim Sook (Republic of Korea): I should like to thank Special Representative Farid Zarif for his briefing this morning. I should also like to welcome to the Council Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of Serbia, and Mr. Hashim Thaçi, Prime Minister of Kosovo.

The Republic of Korea welcomes the ongoing negotiations process between Belgrade and Pristina on the normalization of relations. It is encouraging that both sides have demonstrated seriousness and firm political will to engage in the dialogue. We also applaud the positive contributions of the European Union in facilitating the high-level meetings. We are especially grateful for the personal commitment to this issue on the part of High Representative Ashton. While the recent meeting in Brussels ended inconclusively, we believe that such dialogue itself marks an important step. Such high-level engagement has already led to early results on the ground. Specifically, we are pleased at the implementation of the integrated border management agreement, with the opening of the four crossing points on the border of northern Kosovo. We encourage both sides to continue the dialogue to resolve remaining differences. We sincerely hope that further tangible progress will be made at the next meeting, on 2 April.

Turning to the security situation in Kosovo, the overall security situation has remained calm and stable. However, the recent unrest and fragile security situation in northern Kosovo remains a serious concern. There have been a number of violent protests against the border agreement. In addition, we are also concerned about multiple incidents targeting minorities. With that shared concern, we encourage the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to further strengthen its cooperation with other international agencies and local authorities in monitoring the situation and reducing tensions on the ground.

Another serious concern is the growing number of incidents of religious intolerance. In spite of the efforts to the Kosovo Police and the Kosovo Force, incidents involving the desecration of graves and Orthodox cemeteries and the vandalism of religious of religious and cultural heritage sites continued to be reported. Such acts are unacceptable and need to be addressed resolutely.

Those incidents and the increased tensions between ethnic groups pose obstacles to the reconciliation process

and the progress achieved so far. As such, we urge the authorities in Kosovo to investigate such incidents thoroughly, work towards bringing all perpetrators to justice and take all the necessary preventive measures.

Confidence-building among communities is indispensable in the entire process towards normalization and long-term reconciliation. In spite of the significant progress and the political dialogue, we have seen major challenges stemming from misunderstanding a lack of trust. Therefore, the political dialogue should take place parallel to confidence-building measures, including through educational initiatives and awareness-raising campaigns. To that end, it is crucial that the authorities of Kosovo integrate and embrace their citizens in the north, as well as the ethnic minority groups.

In addition, public trust in the fairness and credibility of law-enforcement agencies will be decisive in building a harmonious, multi-ethnic society. Respect for norms and standards and a strengthened role for legal institutions will prevent minor incidents from escalating into inter-communal clashes. In that context, we encourage the Kosovo authorities to continue to strengthen the national rule of law and to build institutional capabilities in close coordination with the European Rule of Law Mission.

In conclusion, I would like to commend Special Representative Zarif and UNMIK for their commitment and efforts to maintain peace and stability in Kosovo and the region.

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): I would like to thank Mr. Farid Zarif for his briefing. We have taken note of the report (S/2013/72) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

We welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of Serbia, and His Excellency Mr. Hashim Thaçi, Prime Minister of Kosovo, to the Security Council and thank them for their statements.

There has been intense engagement between the two Prime Ministers during the current reporting period. We are encouraged by the commitment demonstrated by both sides to resolve their differences through peaceful means. We would like to commend the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton, for her tireless efforts to bring the two sides closer to an agreement. Dialogue offers the best means

to address the outstanding issues between Kosovo and Serbia and reach mutually acceptable solutions. We therefore urge both sides to maintain the momentum of the dialogue process and seize the present window of opportunity by making the necessary compromises. We sincerely hope that the next round of talks on 2 April will lead to an agreement.

The report of the Secretary-General notes that the high-level engagement between the two sides has resulted in the start of the implementation of the agreement on integrated border management at four of the six crossing points. The full implementation of the agreement will help to address a key source of discord that has caused much of the violence witnessed over the last year and a half. Implementation of the other agreements concluded with the facilitation of the European Union would also serve to enhance mutual confidence and help the dialogue process.

The security situation in Kosovo has remained calm. However, the north continued to see some violence. The overall number of recorded incidents affecting minority communities has decreased. All such incidents should be thoroughly investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice. Incidents involving the vandalism of religious sites, damage and theft at Orthodox churches, and the desecration of Orthodox graves continue to be reported. Such incidents are harmful to intercommunal relations and must be addressed.

The Kosovo police should ensure that it equally provides for security for all communities inhabiting the country. The adoption of the community policing and action plan is a step in the right direction. The creation of conditions for the peaceful integration of minority communities and sustainable returns is essential for building the foundation for long-term reconciliation. It would help in convincing the Kosovo Serbs that they share a common future with the Albanians.

We agree with the Secretary-General's assessment of the need for well-grounded efforts aimed at promoting reconciliation among the communities in Kosovo alongside the political process. That will require sincere efforts on the part of the leadership on both sides. We therefore encourage political leaders in both countries to reach out to their respective constituencies in order to prepare them for the difficult decisions and painful compromises ahead.

Finally, UNMIK continues to play a vital role in ensuring stability in Kosovo. We would like to

commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his team for their dedication and hard work in the service of peace in Kosovo.

Mr. Mehdiyev (Azerbaijan): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, for presenting the report (S/2013/72) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Serbian Prime Minister, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and thank him and Mr. Hashim Thaçi for their statements.

Azerbaijan's position with regard to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia and the non-recognition of Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence remain unchanged. Resolution 1244 (1999) continues to be the binding international legal basis for a comprehensive settlement through a political process and negotiations.

In that connection, we commend the leadership in Belgrade and Pristina for their commitment and determination to achieve substantial progress in the dialogue facilitated by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to agree on some of the most difficult issues during the meeting held in Brussels on 20 March. We encourage the sides to remain committed to reaching agreements through a mutually acceptable solution and to make further progress during the next meeting, scheduled for 2 April. The successful outcome of the dialogue is indispensable so as to move forward in overcoming the burden of the past, normalizing relations and bringing about lasting stability for the region.

We emphasize the utmost importance of UNMIK's presence and activities in Kosovo. As the Secretary-General notes in his report, during the reporting period the Mission continued to work closely with the communities on the ground and to collaborate with all other mandated international presences to enhance the prospects of success in the political dialogue. It is important that UNMIK maintain and further develop its key role in ensuring the coordination of all international efforts under its status-neutral framework, as is envisaged in resolution 1244 (1999).

According to the report, the overall security situation remained generally calm during the reporting

period, with the exception of northern Kosovo, where some serious incidents were reported. Indeed, ethnically motivated attacks and violence, acts of vandalism of religious sites and other forms of religious intolerance have continued, affecting first and foremost the rights and freedoms of minority communities in Kosovo. Needless to say, the atmosphere of impunity for such violations will hardly contribute to enhancing public confidence or to building the foundation for long-term reconciliation.

The voluntary return of internally displaced persons to Kosovo again showed few signs of improvement during the reporting period. At the same time, we commend the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to promote dialogue between potential returnees and the receiving communities. According to the report, some progress was also made in the provision of municipal support for housing construction and refurbishment, as well as in the implementation of the UNHCR return and reintegration project. These are encouraging developments that should be further supported and promoted.

We agree with the Secretary-General that of equal importance to the high-level political process are sustained and well-grounded efforts to promote reconciliation and to increase trust among the communities in Kosovo. In that regard, the preservation of the region's rich cultural diversity and the further promotion of its cultural and spiritual heritage on the basis of ethnic and religious tolerance should undoubtedly remain one of the key objectives.

The establishment of tools and the strengthening of the principle of justice and the rule of law are also imperative to building confidence and achieving a lasting political settlement. In that regard, we take note of the information regarding the ongoing criminal investigation by the Special Investigative Task Force into the report related to a wide range of alleged criminal offences, including organized crime, the inhuman treatment of people and organ trafficking. We are encouraged by the high-level political commitments throughout the region to support the investigation conducted by the Task Force.

We note also that during the reporting period UNMIK continued to support and encourage progress on the issue of missing persons, which remains one of the essential aspects of reconciliation. We encourage

the sides and international partners to intensify their efforts and enhance coordination to that end.

In conclusion, I should like to commend UNMIK, under the leadership of Special Representative Zarif, for its efforts and for its important role in the maintenance of peace and stability in Kosovo and the entire region.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): I would like to thank Special Representative Zarif for his presentation this morning and for the participation in today's debate by Prime Ministers Đačić and Thaçi and for their remarks. We warmly welcome them both.

Given that this is the first time that Australia has spoken in a debate on Kosovo in the Council, I would like to state Australia's support for an independent and sovereign Kosovo. While we recognize that there is not a unanimity of views within the Council on this question, Australia wishes to note that it was one of the first few countries to recognize Kosovo's independence, in February 2008.

We commend the leadership displayed by both Prime Ministers in elevating the European Union-mediated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina to the highest political level. That has been essential. Of course, it is not an easy process, but we are very encouraged by their personal and constructive contribution to seven rounds of trilateral negotiations, including in Brussels this week.

The discussions between the Prime Ministers builds on other recent positive developments, including the meeting between Presidents Nikolić and Jahjaga in early February, which was a powerful symbol of the commitment of both parties to continuing their dialogue so as to find a long-term solution. Trust-building and reconciliation among communities in Kosovo is, obviously, a vital complement to the political process.

The role of the European Union (EU) and High Representative Ashton has been decisive in advancing the dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo. We commend those ongoing endeavours, which have achieved genuine results, including the commencement of the integrated agreement on the management of crossing points and customs, and the exchange of liaison officers based in the EU delegations in Belgrade and Pristina. Both countries have a European future.

We welcome the strong endorsement of the process provided by both the National Assembly of Serbia and the authorities of the Republic of Kosovo, which has

sent powerful messages to their own communities on the fundamental importance to the futures of both countries of a successful outcome to the negotiations.

The security situation in northern Kosovo, particularly around northern Mitrovica, remains fragile. Both sides need to do more and to work harder to improve the situation in the north. We condemn acts of vandalism against significant cultural and religious heritage sites. The prompt reaction by local authorities, the condemnation of violence by all political parties and the swift action of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) have helped to prevent further incidents, and we commend those actions. We encourage all sides to take steps to protect Kosovo's rich and diverse heritage, including that of the Serbian Orthodox and Muslim communities, on the basis of ethnic and religious tolerance. We also encourage the unimpeded resettlement of minority returnees and internally displaced persons in Kosovo. That is vital.

Australia would also like to express its appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Farid Zarif and the United Nations Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for their efforts to ensure a consistent approach by the international presence in Kosovo. We have to be frank about this. UNMIK's job, as mandated by the Council, is a difficult one, but its work has complemented strongly the efforts by the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX), KFOR and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and helped to provide the stability to support direct political dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. We support the ongoing investigation by EULEX into the allegations of organ trafficking, and we support the calls for any persons implicated in war crimes to be held accountable.

To conclude, a broad and substantial political settlement to the question of Kosovo is now within reach, and Australia joins the Secretary-General and other Council members in encouraging both Prime Ministers to continue their dialogue with a determination to bring about lasting stability, not only in Kosovo and between Serbia and Kosovo, but in the broader Balkan region.

We look forward to progress on remaining sensitive issues, such as the governing institutions in northern Kosovo, at the next round of EU-mediated dialogue in April. Following that, it will be important that both parties leverage the confidence and trust that they have so painstakingly created to achieve actual

implementation of the agreements reached at a political level. For our part, we believe that the Security Council and the international community generally stand ready to assist the parties on their path to reconciliation, security and stability.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

We thank Mr. Zarif for introducing the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/72) on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We welcome the participation in this meeting of Prime Minister Dačić of Serbia. We share his assessments. We listened very closely to Mr. Thaçi, as well.

Russia's position with respect to the non-recognition of the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo is unchanged. Resolution 1244 (1999) remains fully in force as the mandatory international legal basis for a comprehensive settlement of the Kosovo issue. We anticipate that the dialogue to be held at the highest political level between Belgrade and Pristina, under European Union mediation, will contribute to a long-term settlement of the issue of Kosovo. At the same time, the Security Council still has the final word.

The United Nations Mission is the core international civilian presence in Kosovo and must carry out its functions in full, in accordance with its mandate under the Security Council. To that end, it must be endowed with all the necessary capacities and resources.

We believe that Kosovo made a serious mistake in its decision to establish a new administrative office in northern Mitrovica, which is financed, *inter alia*, with resources assigned earlier to UNMIK administrative tasks in the northern part of the city. That decision has raised additional tensions in northern Mitrovica.

There has been a series of inter-ethnic and sectarian incidents in Kosovo. Unfortunately, the most flagrant of those do not receive due consideration or analysis in the Secretary-General's report. The wave of anti-Serbian acts that swept through Kosovo in January recalls the tragic events of March 2004. We are particularly concerned about the events that took place at the time of the Serbian Orthodox Christmas in Kosovo. The detention and beating of Serbian believers who arrived at Gračanica — in addition, reports have said that took place in the courthouse building

in Pristina — have again demonstrated the inability of international entities, above all the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), to appropriately withstand acts of provocation by the Kosovar Albanian authorities. Two months have already passed. What are the results of the investigation? Was it neutral and impartial? We are concerned about the widespread attacks against Serbian cemeteries, which have resulted in the desecration of more than 150 grave sites in more than a dozen municipalities.

There was also an arson attack against a church in the town of Obilić, as well as an attempt to burn down a Serbian city hall building in Mitrovica. In that context, the incident that stands out is the memorial to victims of the Second World War, which was blown up in the town of Vitina. We view that as an act of desecration against the memory of the victims of fascism and those who fought against it.

Over and over again, we have drawn attention to the fact that progress on the issue of the resettlement of Serbian refugees and internally displaced persons is essentially nonexistent. An analysis of that situation demonstrates that the Kosovar Albanian authorities systematically impede their return to the province, the restoration of their property rights and compliance with internationally recognized fundamental human rights and freedoms.

There is a conscious effort to create conditions aimed at pushing the remaining Serbian population out of Serbia, under the threat of reprisals, which is a kind of ethnic cleansing by peaceful means, with all the ensuing consequences.

We hope that in future reports on UNMIK and on the situation in the province there will be an objective picture drawn of the situation of the Serbian population in Kosovo. We call on Mr. Zarif to provide a fundamental assessment of the situation and to take an active stance in accordance with his mandate.

The Russian Federation emphasizes that the decisions taken with respect to northern Kosovo must take into account the view of the local Serbian population. If that is not done, compromises will remain only on paper.

Without genuine steps carried out in the areas of inter-ethnic dialogue and confidence-building,

the prospects for a multiethnic society in Kosovo are unrealistic.

We draw attention to the fact that, in the report, attention is focused on the pace of the investigation of the incidents reported by Council of Europe Special Rapporteur Dick Marty on the illegal trafficking of human organs in Kosovo. However, that is not enough. We are looking forward to results. All perpetrators of such acts must be brought to justice. If EULEX does not have sufficient capacity to ensure an effective, objective and impartial investigation, we will not remove that issue from the United Nations agenda.

Under the mandate of the Security Council, KFOR bears core responsibility for the maintenance of security in the province. Any change in its function or format must be approved by the Council.

We hope that NATO will recognize the possible consequences of the transfer of KFOR's responsibility for the safety and security of Orthodox monasteries in the southern part of the province to Pristina's law enforcement entities, and therefore carry out effective measures aimed at avoiding sectarian or inter-ethnic clashes.

We have repeatedly discussed the distressing situation in the provinces home to Serbian Orthodox churches, which have been the subject of vandalism and attacks on their clergy. That problem calls for focused attention. The situation is totally intolerable with respect to the Visoki Dečani Monastery, which UNESCO has designated as a World Heritage Site. Local authorities are inciting the populace to protest with a demand to confiscate the land of the Monastery. The decisions of the Kosovo courts have been ignored, as have the calls of the international community.

We are concerned about statements regarding this year's conversion of the Kosovo security force into a full-fledged armed force. The Kosovo security force consists essentially of Albanians, the majority of whom were earlier militia members. We view that as a potential threat to regional stability.

One must also highlight the heightened Albanian rhetoric. Statements have not gone unnoticed in terms of the intention of Pristina to give patronage to ethnic Albanians regardless of their country of residence. That constitutes a direct step towards the destabilization not only of Kosovo, but of Serbia's neighbours, including the

former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Greece.

The stabilization of the situation in Kosovo remains far off. Problems in the province can be solved only through political means. We anticipate that all international presences will fully adhere to that common position within the framework of efforts to implement the provisions of resolution 1244 (1999).

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

There are no more names inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.